

**LEON VALLEY PARK COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 9, 2013**

The Leon Valley Park Commission met on the 9th day of September, 2013 at 7 p.m. at the Leon Valley City Council Chambers, at 6400 El Verde Road, Leon Valley, Texas, for the purpose of the following business, to-wit:

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE LEON VALLEY PARK COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 9, 2013, 7:00 PM**

1. Call the Leon Valley Park Commission Meeting to Order and Determine a Quorum is Present.

Chairman Bert Thomas called the regular Park Commission meeting to order. Present were Chairman Bert Thomas and Commissioners Benay Cacciatore, Scott Baird, Tom Fraser, Susan Fraser, John Stanley, and Bill Cooper. Absent and excused were Commissioners Linda Tarin and Rachel Felkner. Also present were City Council Liaison Jack Dean, City Staff Member Marisa Flores, and Leon Valley resident Al Uvietta. Let the record show that a quorum was present.

2. Consider Approval of the August 15, 2013 regular meeting minutes.

Chairman Thomas stated that he had a few corrections to the minutes. He asked that the word "detention" on Page 3, Part D, second paragraph, last sentence, be changed to read "retention", and on Page 4, to note that the church being referred to on Evers Road, known as St. John's Baptist, is in Park Zone 4, with the 60' right of way that leads to the Linkwood Addition subdivision. He stated that the other church is on Huebner Road and is the Mormon Church, which is located in Park Zone 3. He further noted that the property with the two silos is also in Park Zone 3.

Commissioner Baird made a motion to approve the August 15th, 2013 meeting minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cacciatore, and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Thomas addressed the Commission, stating that Commissioner Tarin was absent and that Park Commission Secretary Rachel Felkner had resigned from the Park Commission, due to time constraints.

3. Citizens to be Heard

Chairman Thomas asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak to the Commission. City Council member Dean noted that he did not. Leon Valley resident Al Uvietta addressed the Commission, stating that he was pleased to hear the Commission was working on the 2010 Parks and Open Space Master Plan and that, in order to maximize the City's chances of obtaining a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife, a current Park Master Plan was essential. He noted that he had brought his records of the previous Park Master Plan and that would be happy to get each Commissioner a copy on CD. He then reminded the

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Commission that the park could not be restricted to Leon Valley citizens as portions of it were built with federal funds.

Mr. Uvietta then stated that he had heard the Commission was considering a recommendation for the development of a trail along the western bank of Huebner Creek on Evers Road. He explained that it had been a Park Commission recommendation in the past, but that it could not be developed in that manner as it contained easements for SAWS, the City of Leon Valley, and City Public Service. He then reiterated that he was pleased to see the Commission was moving ahead. He also noted that he was anxious to see the proposed Hike & Bike Trail developed.

4. Reports: Activities that Impact the Park or Access to the Park.

There being no reports on activities, no discussion was held.

5. Discuss:

A. Rules for Conducting Leon Valley Park Meetings

Commissioner Baird explained that the new rules were taken from City Council meeting rules and that the reason for using Robert's Rules of Order was to assure that everyone was given an equal chance to speak at the meetings. He further explained that the Commissioners now had a method for speaking up and correctly interrupting an agenda item. He also explained how to appeal a motion and how to get an agenda item clarified.

B. Discuss: Pocket Parks, Adjoining Trails & Connectivity

Chairman Thomas noted that the Commission had been talking about incorporating pocket parks and connectivity in all zones, but especially in Zones 1, 2, and 4, where there was limited connectivity. He reminded the Commission that they had asked for a definition of pocket parks at their last meeting and that Staff member Melinda Smith had provided one. He then read the definition to the Commission as follows:

"A pocket park (also known as a parkette, mini-park, vest-pocket park or vesty park) is a small park accessible to the general public. Pocket parks are frequently created on a single vacant building lot or on small, irregular pieces of land. They also may be created as a component of the public space requirement of large building projects."

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Pocket parks can be urban, suburban or rural, and can be on public or private land. Although they are too small for physical activities, pocket parks provide greenery, a place to sit outdoors, and sometimes a children's playground. They may be created around a monument, historic marker or art project.

In highly urbanized areas, particularly downtowns where land is very expensive, pocket parks are the only option for creating new public spaces without large-scale redevelopment. In inner-city areas, pocket parks are often part of urban regeneration plans and provide areas where wildlife such as birds can establish a foothold. Unlike larger parks, pocket parks are sometimes designed to be fenced and locked when not in use."

Commissioner Cooper gave his opinion that, at a minimum, a pocket park should be mowed, have a trash can and a picnic table or bench. He stated that the Commission should have Public Works create a list of what areas were currently designated as pocket parks. He explained that in order to better monitor where these parks were being located, they needed to have more control over their placement. He noted that he knew of two; one being just outside of the Public Works facility, and another being located just outside the Huebner-Onion residence on Bandera Road, known as the Triangle area. He explained that the Triangle area was currently limited as there was no place to park and that traffic on Bandera Road would hinder the proposed development of a parking lot at that site.

Commissioner Susan Fraser gave her opinion, stating that considerations for creating a pocket park might include the installation of mulch instead of grass, due to watering restrictions and the availability of Public Works employee's time, and that it should include placement of benches or tables.

Commissioner Baird stated that he thought having a definition of a pocket park and amenities should be included in the Park Master Plan for future reference.

Commissioner Baird explained that because of the previous direction to Staff to provide a definition of a pocket park, the definition was automatically approved. He stated that what the Commission did with the definition was still to be determined. He then told the Commission that he had been researching pocket parks in San Antonio and other small local cities and that he had observed the small parks near hotels in the downtown area of San Antonio being well used. He noted that the Triangle Park's proximity to InTown Suites

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hotel would encourage the patrons of the hotel to use that park, especially if playground equipment was installed at the site. He noted that the site was kept mowed.

Chairman Thomas stated that he thought the Commission should now review each of the Park Zones, and then requested the Commissioners recommendations for the Shadow Mist subdivision. He noted that at present, the parkland was in poor condition due to asphalt and other materials being stored on the site. He explained that the City would be clearing the area and that once cleared, he thought a playground should be installed temporarily at the site, until the Crystal Hills Park was constructed. He further stated the Developer of this Subdivision donated the land for use as Parkland.

Commissioner Stanley stated that the area behind St. John's Baptist Church's parking lot could be designated as a pocket park in Zone 4, but that it should be left in a natural condition, with brush being cleared, and connectivity developed for the area. Commissioner Stanley noted that benches and a trash can would be welcomed in the Linkwood area; however, by the time a person was in that area, they were already close to Raymond Rimkus Park

Commissioner Baird commented that once the 2010 Park Master Plan was in place, the Park Commission could apply for one single grant to develop pocket parks in each of the Zones, assuring a much better chance of being awarded a grant by combining them in the request.

Chairman Thomas asked Commissioner Baird what amenities and/or equipment he envisioned being placed in the proposed pocket park at Shadow Mist. Commissioner Baird noted that trees were already in place, but benches and a trashcan would be nice. Chairman Thomas noted that the children of Shadow Mist should be provided a playground area.

Chairman Thomas then addressed The Ridge and Seneca III areas. City Councilmember Jack Dean noted that there is a proposed trail that runs from behind the automotive dealership on Bandera Road to the Seneca III subdivision, which could eventually connect with Leon Valley Ranches. He further noted that the owner of a big portion of that area was currently involved in litigation with the City, but that there had been talk of granting the City an easement for a trail. Chairman Thomas noted that he would like to see a pocket park at The Ridge, as the developer had donated money in lieu of parkland. Councilmember Jack Dean explained that the reason the

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developer had supplied the funds was that there was no undeveloped land in that development. Chairman Thomas commented that the Park Commission would have to perform a review of the area to see what could be done.

Chairman Thomas noted that the Commission had all the information they needed on most of the proposed pocket parks, including The Ridge and Shadow Mist, and reiterated the recommendation of playground equipment in the Shadow Mist parkland. He stated that in Zone 4, a pocket park with benches, a trash can, and shrubbery would be appropriate. Commissioner Cooper noted that it didn't need a picnic table as it was too close to Raymond Rimkus Park. He noted that the Church might want to have an Easter egg hunt and a plain grassy area would be more appropriate for that activity. He recommended placement of a trash barrel.

C. Discuss: Commissioner's Requests for Items Needed in Assigned Parkland Zone

Chairman Thomas noted that if shrubs were placed around benches, they would need to be maintained. He stated that the benches with shrubs at the park were overgrown and needed maintenance. He stated that he'd had a chance to look at each of the Commissioner's Park Zones and that he had made up a matrix of each area for the Commission to review and that they should indicate what they would like placed in each area.

Commissioner Cooper asked in what Park Zone the HEB Grocery store was located. Chairman Thomas stated that it was in Zone 2. Commissioner Cooper asked about the vacant land in that area. Chairman Thomas noted that most of the area was in a floodway. Commissioner Cooper specified that he was talking about the creek in front of the HEB parking lot. Chairman Thomas reiterated it being a floodway. He further explained that the neighborhood area in that Zone was closer to the corner of Bandera and Evers.

Resident Al Uvietta stated The Ridge and Seneca III connected to the Bexar County Flood Control project in Huebner Creek and that they could define an access as a part of their flood control project, and that the County would pay for those improvements. Commissioner Tom Fraser asked if this area would be a part of the Hike & Bike Trail. Mr. Uvietta urged the Park Commission to be involved in the development of the area.

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Chairman Thomas asked if there were any other recommendations for Zone 2. Commissioner Baird said that a six acre undeveloped tract was located across from Pat Neff Middle School on Evers Road that would be ideal for a park, but that it might be privately owned. Mr. Uvietta explained that a dumping area was located on that tract.

Chairman Thomas asked the Commission if there were any other recommendations for Zone 3. Commissioner Tom Fraser stated he would like to reiterate his desire that the crosswalk on Evers Road be improved as quickly as possible. He stated that he had seen a woman with a stroller almost being injured by cross traffic at that spot. Chairman Thomas concurred. Commissioner Tom Fraser noted that he would like to see an electronic crosswalk device installed.

City Councilmember Jack Dean explained that the City Manager was investigating methods for improvement of that crosswalk. Chairman Thomas stated that VIA should be involved in correcting the problem, as their bus station was located at that point. Councilmember Dean again stated that the City Manager was investigating solutions for this problem. Chairman Thomas commented that the tree limbs needed to be cut back in order for vehicular traffic to see the crosswalk signs. He also stated that he would like to see a wider sidewalk at that location.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he would like to see an engineer's report on the easement that went through the area. He noted that every time there is a flood, all the vegetation was stripped and that there might be some type of vegetation that could withstand such flooding.

Chairman Thomas then moved on, stating that last year, the Public Works department removed a loading zone from the small parking area along Poss Road to incorporate compact car parking. He explained that this had created a problem with persons trying to unload their vehicles at the Park entrance. He stated that the compact car parking area should be removed and the loading zone reinstalled.

Commissioner Stanley stated that he would like to see the "No Parking" area just to the west of that location turned into a loading zone. Chairman Thomas advised that it is not close enough to the creek crossover into the Park at that area, and that the better solution would be to return the parking lot back to its original intent and purpose.

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Chairman Thomas then asked if there were any other improvements needed in Zone 3. He stated that recommendations should include sun covers at the playground area, trails through Raymond Rimkus Park resurfaced, the Commission should recommend construction of pocket parks at the area of the two silos, and that the trail should be continued from that area to Forest Ridge at the city limits. Commissioner Cooper agreed.

Mr. Uvietta concurred, stating that he had included that recommendation in a request for a grant, but the property had drainage issues, as well as an incline. He explained that a 12:1 grade for ADA accessibility would be required. He stated he had been told it could not be done, but he didn't necessarily agree with that opinion. Commissioner Cooper commented the recommendation had been in a previous proposal, but that he was unable to locate that proposal.

Chairman Thomas concluded the discussion by listing recommendations such as the construction of a pocket park by the Little League field on Poss Road, along with continuation of the trails in that area. An inventory, along with maintenance, repair, and replacement of equipment and facilities, should be conducted at Raymond Rimkus Park, annually. Commissioner Tom Fraser added that he would like to see more permanent improvements to be installed.

Councilmember Dean mentioned that \$100,000 had been allocated in the next year's budget for repairs to park. He recommended staggering the Commission's recommendations by priority. He stated that the Council had agreed the park needed a facelift.

Commissioner Susan Fraser told the Commission she had been at the park the previous evening and had noticed a small child playing basketball. She said that she asked the child if a lower basketball hoop would be of any help to him and the child said that it would. She recommended the installation of child sized basketball hoops or the creation of a specific area for child sized basketball facilities. The Commission agreed, stating that a child sized basketball court would discourage older children from playing with them, and that they could be installed near the playground area, along the back fence.

Commissioner Baird stated that he just realized that on page 10, second paragraph, of the approved previous meeting minutes, Staff member Smith

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had told the Commission that there were several improvements that could be accomplished immediately. He stated that he thought they were in the process of replacing several items at that time, but that he must have misunderstood.

Councilmember Dean stated that, while money had been budgeted for the park improvements, the budget was still in the process of being approved.

Chairman Thomas noted that he would like to use some of that money to acquire more property around the park. Councilmember Dean noted that the prices of land adjacent to the park were exorbitant and that the City had been unable to afford a purchase. He noted that they had been able to purchase the property next to the curve of the creek on Huebner, but it was expensive at the \$20,000 purchase price. He explained the City could not justify spending large amounts of money on land located within a floodway.

Mr. Uvietta noted that at one time, the land was being offered at \$14,000, but that the property owner had inflated the price to \$128,000, after learning of plans to place Public Works buildings at the site. He stated that he told the person that the City could not afford that amount. He then stated that the City had inadvertently fueled property owner expectations of huge profits.

D. Discuss: Items needing to be changed in the proposed 2010 Park Master Plan we received at our last Park Commission Meeting.

Chairman Thomas stated that he meant to address the basketball courts at the park and the need to increase their size to full court. He also stated that the courts needed to be resurfaced.

Commissioner Susan Fraser indicated that she wanted the installation of child size courts recommended in the 2010 Park Master Plan.

Chairman Thomas stated that signage along Poss Road at the entrance to the Park also needed to be recommended in the Park Master Plan, as well as a wildlife viewing area, although the previous plan had stated that the platform was to be located in the Natural Area and that was not the proposed location. Mr. Uvietta stated that the platform was recommended to be located in the Park, looking into the Natural Area, and that it was to be ADA compliant.

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Chairman Thomas noted the change, and that the Park Plan stated that Shadow Mist was in Zone 1, but was really located in Zone 2, and that the Shadow Mist developer's giving money in lieu of park land was in listed in each of the matrix areas and that might confuse people.

He reminded the Commission that another recommendation from the public was to plant more trees and plants throughout the City. He commented that one of the groups planted wildflowers along the drainage area between Evers Road and Public Works, and that Public Works employees had mowed them down. He mentioned that maybe the two groups could come to a consensus as to when the area should be mowed to prevent this from occurring in the future. Councilmember Dean stated that maybe the plantings were not well thought out. Chairman Thomas responded by saying that the group consisted of Master Gardeners. Councilmember Dean noted that Master Gardeners had planted in the park garden and that the plantings were not acceptable looking. He further noted that some areas were kept mowed for aesthetics and to prevent fires.

Chairman Thomas reiterated the recommendation to plant trees and shrubs around benches and water fountains, crepe myrtles around the ball diamond, and build an ADA accessible path around Raymond Rimkus Park. He further recommended building natural crossovers in the Natural Area, where the drainage channels crossed the trail. He then went on to the Zone 4 recommendation for connectivity in that area. He then asked the Commission if they had any other recommendations to add to the proposed Plan.

Commissioner Cooper stated he had a general comment regarding the trash cans at the Park and the fact that some were missing. He asked if anyone knew where they were, or if they were being stolen. Commissioner Fraser stated that he had been told some were washed away during the recent flooding. Commissioner Stanley said that he walked through the Park each day and that cans he had thrown trash in the previous day came up missing when he went back, and then asked why anyone would steal a trash can. Commissioner Fraser commented that they should have been chained down. Commissioner Baird agreed.

Commissioner Susan Fraser stated that, while on the subject of trash, the Commission should officially commend a Leon Valley couple who make a point to walk the park each day to pick up trash, as they were performing a valued service to their community. She noted that she couldn't remember

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their last name, but Commissioner Tom Fraser had their business card. (Harry and Leslie Hendricks, 6516 Adair Drive)

Chairman Thomas stated that the Commission had now reviewed all items in the proposed 2010 Park Master Plan. Commissioner Tom Fraser stated that he thought the Commission should now prioritize each item in order of importance and cost, so when the proposed Plan is submitted to City Council, they would know what items were most important to the Park Commission. Councilmember Dean concurred with the recommendation. Commissioner Tom Fraser noted that costs would probably be of most importance to the Council and Chairman Thomas agreed. Commissioner Tom Fraser suggested that the Commission set priorities at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

Commissioner Baird stated that he had been trying to locate the Master Plan recommendations he had received from Chairman Thomas, entitled "Corrections & Additions to 2010 Master Plan". Chairman Thomas added that he had created the document in an attempt to get the corrections into the first draft of the City's revised 2010 Park Master Plan, and that he inserted those items in his latest draft.

Commissioner Baird stated that he would have liked to have made a motion to adopt the revised Plan, prioritize the recommendations, and apply for a grant to fund the recommendations; however, he thought that not all members had had the opportunity to read the entire document thoroughly, and therefore would not make that motion. He stated that instead, he would make a motion that the Commission accept the corrections to the Plan from the document titled "Corrections and Additions to the 2010 Park Master Plan" as written by Chairman Bert Thomas, and accept the Master Plan at the next meeting. Commissioner Stanley seconded the motion. Chairman Thomas asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Stanley asked for confirmation of the intent of the motion.

Commissioner Cooper noted that the corrections had already been incorporated by virtue of the motion. Chairman Thomas noted that the previous changes had created a draft document and that the new changes were recommendations for all areas, including individual Park Zones. Commissioner Baird noted that he was speaking against the motion. He then changed his motion to accept the 2010 Park and Open Space Master Plan, with the Corrections and Additions as written by Chairman Thomas. The

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motion was seconded by Commissioner Stanley. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Thomas recognized Mr. Uvietta from the audience. Mr. Uvietta stated that he had one recommendation in the area of prioritization, and that was to not list the priorities in the 2010 Parks and Open Space Master Plan, but rather state them in future grant proposals to Texas Parks and Wildlife, as grants requests were required to meet specific guidelines and the importance of each priority may change. He suggested that the Commission make a list rating each item's importance and then include that in any future proposals as state funding becomes available.

6. Commissioner's and Staff Comments

Chairman Thomas asked if anyone else had any comments. Councilmember Jack Dean reported that the proposed fire break in the Huebner-Onion Natural Area Park had been completed by the Leon Valley Fire Department. He explained that the Texas Forestry Service had assisted them with the work and that the National Forestry Service was sending a representative to review the area and possibly suggest using the Leon Valley fire break as a model for other urban areas, and that the new Fire Chief might be presented an award for his work. He urged the Commission to go take a look at the area. He commented that the area looked great and that it was not as big of a disturbance to the Natural Area Park as had been feared, and it provided the protection of the public's safety by inhibiting fires along the rear fences that abut the Natural Area Park.

Commissioner Baird asked what arrangements had been made to keep the area cleared. Councilmember Dean answered the City would work with the Historical Society to keep the area cleared, and would also work with them on the proposed pocket park, explaining that the City Council had allocated a large amount of money to develop the Triangle area pocket park, and that although the Historical Society still wanted to make that a parking lot, he didn't think it was a viable project according to TXDOT. He noted that he was a strong proponent of assuring the proposed Hike & Bike Trail was ADA compliant, but complimentary to the Natural Area. He reiterated that he wanted everyone to enjoy that area.

A general discussion was held regarding the proposed Hike & Bike Trail and the alignment of that trail through the Natural Area.

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7. Announcements

None were made.

8. Adjournment

Chairman Thomas thanked the guests in the audience for their participation and then asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Stanley motioned to adjourn, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Susan Fraser. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.



Chairman Bert Thomas

10-15-13

Date

Approved by the Park Commission on the 14th day of October, 2013.